

3.17 PUBLIC SERVICES

3.17.1 Introduction

This section discusses the potential for the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project to result in temporary and long-term demands on public services such as police and fire protection and trauma centers. The study area for public services includes Imperial County and the communities near the Salton Sea that would provide emergency medical services.

Table 3.17-1 summarizes the impacts of the six Project alternatives on public services compared to both the existing conditions and the No Action Alternative.

Table 3.17-1 Summary of Impacts on Public Services								
Impact	Basis of Comparison	Project Alternative						Mitigation Measures
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors.	Existing Condition	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
	No Action	L	L	L	L	L	L	None required
Note: O = No Impact L = Less-than-Significant Impact S = Significant Impact, but Mitigable to Less than Significant U = Significant Unavoidable Impact B = Beneficial Impact								

3.17.2 Regulatory Requirements

No state or Federal regulatory requirements regarding public services are applicable to the SCH Project. The Land Use Element of the Imperial County General Plan (County of Imperial 2008) includes a number of goals, objectives, and policies that focus on providing adequate public services to county residents.

3.17.3 Affected Environment

3.17.3.1 Police Protection

Imperial County Sheriff's Department is responsible for law enforcement in the county's unincorporated portions, including the areas where the proposed SCH Project sites are located. Imperial County Sheriff's Department is headquartered in El Centro. Nine additional command staff supports the sheriff. The Patrol Division is divided into the North County Patrol, South County Patrol, Palo Verde Patrol, and Winterhaven Patrol. Substations for the Sheriff's Office are located in Salton City, Brawley, Winterhaven, Palo Verde, and Niland. The substations are not staffed at all times, but officers patrol the communities and surrounding areas continuously (Imperial County Sheriff's Office 2009; personal communication, A. Gomez 2010).

3.17.3.2 Fire Protection

Imperial County Fire Department is responsible for fire protection in the county's unincorporated portions. Some communities, such as Salton Sea Beach, maintain volunteer fire departments or supplement the fire departments with volunteer firefighters. Response times vary according to location (personal communications, J. Zendejas and M. York 2010). Mutual aid agreements have been established between Imperial County and area cities, thus providing additional support. The City of Imperial contracts with Imperial County Fire Department and maintains three fire captains, six firefighters, and one deputy fire chief. Three engine crewmembers are on duty at all times and a Duty Fire Chief supervises daily operations. The City of Imperial houses one new front line fire engine and one reserve fire engine (City of Imperial Fire Department 2010). The City of Westmorland maintains 22 volunteers and 1 part-time fire chief serving within the city limits as well as other county areas. Response time within the city's municipal limits is approximately 4 minutes. The City of Westmorland contracts with Imperial County to receive certain fire protection equipment in exchange for fire protection services (City of Westmorland 2010). The City of Brawley maintains 14 full-time firefighter personnel with 5 firefighters on duty at all times and 25 reserve firefighter personnel. The department houses four engines: three city engines and one county engine. Call response times within the city of Brawley municipal limits ranges from 2 to 7 minutes.

3.17.3.3 Emergency Services

The hospitals nearest the Salton Sea are Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Brawley and El Centro Regional Medical Center in El Centro. Pioneer Memorial Hospital is a 107-bed acute care facility that maintains a 16-bed emergency department staffed by a physician 24 hours a day. The emergency facility is a Level IV¹ trauma center and maintains an average door-to-doctor time of 20 minutes (Pioneer Memorial Hospital 2010). El Centro Regional Medical Center is a 165-bed general acute care facility that has the only rooftop hospital heliport in Imperial County, facilitating transport to and from the facility in emergency situations. El Centro Regional Medical Center Emergency Department is classified as a Level II, Basic Emergency Medical Service and maintains 20 beds. The Emergency Department is open 24 hours a day and is staffed with a minimum of two physicians (El Centro Regional Medical Center 2010).

3.17.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

3.17.4.1 Impact Analysis Methodology

The impact assessment was based on a comparison of the demand for utilities and service systems resulting from the SCH alternatives to the existing capacity.

3.17.4.2 Thresholds of Significance

Significance Criteria

Impacts would be significant if the Project alternatives would:

- Result in substantial adverse physical impacts on or require new or physically altered government facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection, police protection, trauma centers, schools, parks, and other public facilities.

¹ A Level IV trauma center is a rural facility that (1) supplements care within a larger trauma system; (2) provides initial evaluation and assessment of injured patients; (3) must have 24-hour emergency coverage by a physician; and (4) has transfer agreements and a good working relationship with the nearest Level I, II, or II center.

Application of Significance Criteria

A summary of the overall methodology used in applying the significance criteria to the Project alternatives follows:

- **Results in impacts on or requires new or altered facilities for fire and police protection, trauma centers, schools, or other public facilities** – The primary risks to public services would be associated with accidents that could occur at construction sites, on roadways due to construction, or due to maintenance activities. It is estimated that fewer than 50 out-of-town construction workers and their families could temporarily reside in the areas surrounding the Salton Sea during the 2-year construction period. Only a small number of employees would be required during operations. These minor increases in population would not increase demands on schools, libraries, parks, or other public facilities such that substantial adverse physical impacts would occur or new or physically altered government facilities would be required. Therefore, this analysis focuses on potential impacts to fire and police protection and emergency services that may be required.

3.17.4.3 No Action Alternative

As described in the *Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report* (California Department of Water Resources and California Department of Fish and Game 2007), the No Action Alternative would involve construction and operations and maintenance activities for pupfish channels. Additionally, Imperial Irrigation District (IID), as mitigation for the IID Water Conservation and Transfer Project, is required to relocate campgrounds, roads, and trails that are currently located adjacent to the Salton Sea at the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, as well as boat launches along the shoreline.

Construction and operations and maintenance activities under the No Action Alternative could result in increased traffic accidents, construction accidents, and fire and chemical hazards at the construction site and on the roads due to the construction activity. The amount of construction activity could also increase the need for police services due to trespassing and theft.

3.17.4.4 Alternative 1 – New River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Ponds

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). Construction and maintenance activities could result in an increased potential for traffic accidents, construction accidents, and fire and chemical hazards at the construction site and on the roads due to construction/maintenance activity. The amount of construction/maintenance activity could also increase the need for police services due to trespassing and/or theft of construction materials or equipment. The Project does not include any unusually dangerous activities, however, and the increased demand associated with construction/maintenance activities would be within the capacity of local emergency service providers. As discussed above, the No Action Alternative would include construction/maintenance activities that would also increase the demand for emergency services, but they would be spread out over a long period of time and like the SCH Project, would not include unusually dangerous activities. The increased demand would not be expected to affect the ability of providers to maintain their current level of service or require new or altered facilities. Impacts would be less than significant when compared to both the existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

As discussed in Section 3.18, Recreation, the Project would allow the public access to the pond sites to engage in recreational activities such as hiking, bird-watching, and nonmotorized watercraft use to the extent that these activities were compatible with the Project's goals and objectives. These activities are

not particularly risky, and while the demand for emergency services may increase as a result of the increased activities, the demand would not be expected to affect the ability of providers to maintain their current level of service or require new or altered facilities. Waterfowl hunting also would be allowed consistent with the protection of other avian resources, but also would not be expected to significantly affect levels of service. In 2006, 219 nonfatal and 27 fatal hunting incidents occurred in the United States, and only ten of these accidents occurred in California (International Hunter Education Association 2011). In 2007, 220 nonfatal and 19 fatal hunting accidents occurred in the United States, and five of these accidents occurred in California (International Hunter Education Association 2011). Therefore, the risk of an accident is low. Impacts would be less than significant when compared to both the existing environmental setting and the No Action Alternative.

3.17.4.5 Alternative 2 – New River, Pumped Diversion

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

3.17.4.6 Alternative 3 – New River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

3.17.4.7 Alternative 4 – Alamo River, Gravity Diversion + Cascading Pond

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

3.17.4.8 Alternative 5 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

3.17.4.9 Alternative 6 – Alamo River, Pumped Diversion + Cascading Ponds

Impact PS-1: Construction and maintenance activities could result in increased demand for emergency services (police, fire, and trauma centers), as could increased use of the Project site by recreational visitors (less-than-significant impact). The discussion under Alternative 1 is applicable to this alternative.

3.17.5 References

California Department of Water Resources and California Department of Fish and Game. 2007. Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.

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- 1 City of Westmorland Fire Department. 2010 *Westmorland Fire Department*. Website
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- 3 County of Imperial. 2008. Imperial County General Plan: Land use element. Website
4 (<http://www.icpds.com/?pid=571>).
- 5 El Centro Regional Medical Center. 2010. *Services*. Website (<http://www.ecrmc.org/about-us/>) accessed
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- 7 Imperial County Sheriff's Office. 2009. *Office of the Sheriff and Patrol Divisions*. Website
8 (<http://www.icsso.org/>) accessed October 25, 2010.
- 9 International Hunter Education Association. 2011. *Incident reports*. Website ([http://www.ihea.com/news-](http://www.ihea.com/news-and-events/incident-reports/index.php)
10 [and-events/incident-reports/index.php](http://www.ihea.com/news-and-events/incident-reports/index.php)) accessed January 10, 2010.
- 11 Pioneer Memorial Hospital. 2010. *Emergency services*. Website
12 (<http://www.pmhd.org/Services/emergency.html>) accessed October 18, 2010.
- 13 **3.17.6 Personal Communications**
- 14 Gomez, Anna. 2010. Imperial County Sheriff's Office. Personal communication with Jennifer
15 Longabaugh, Dudek, on November 29, 2010.
- 16 York, Michael. 2010. Fire Captain, City of Brawley Fire Department. Personal communication with
17 Jennifer Longabaugh, Dudek, on September 17, 2010.
- 18 Zendejas, Jesse. 2010. Fire Captain, City of Brawley Fire Department. Personal communication with
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SECTION 3.0
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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